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### Testimony by Robyn Miller in support of House Bill 404

Is anyone happy with the government school system, anyone at all? Even those who are the most ardent supporters, defenders and promoters of the government school system are not really happy because to their way of thinking we never spend enough money and we never keep the children in the system long enough.

So why do we stubbornly cling to this rigid assumption that forced government schooling is the only way children should be educated when practically no one is happy with it? It is because the compulsory school attendance law is a very effective control over society by means of intimidation. After six or seven generations of government institutionalized schooling it is very difficult for people to imagine anything else. But, I can tell you from a broad range of experience that forced government schooling and education are not the same things.

I am a former government school teacher, a former government school parent and a 13 year home education veteran. When I was a school teacher, I became very suspicious that the system itself was causing most of the so-called learning disabilities. Once my own children were in the system my suspicions were confirmed. It isn't the children who are flawed, it is the system. Institutionalizing children for 180 days per year during their most formative years pre-empts normal, healthy mental, social and emotional development. It is an anti-learning, anti-social, anti-child environment.

In time, I came to realize that the system of forced government schooling is socialism, which of course is government control over the production and distribution of a good or service, in other words, a government monopoly. It is welfare, forced welfare for all. It is compulsion and because it is compulsion it is also indoctrination. It doesn't matter whose agenda is in place, left or right, as long as it is compulsory whatever agenda or worldview is in place it will be indoctrination; and it is, as I stressed before, institutionalizing. Socialism, welfare, compulsion, indoctrination and institutionalizing, none of these are any good for our children (or our society) and all of these are the opposite of freedom.

Free people do not allow their government to dictate the education of their children. How can we be free if our government is our educator? It is a complete contradiction. Free people should shape their government but with the compulsory school attendance law the government shapes the people.

It is delusional to think we have educational freedom in Montana simply because we have permission from the legislature to home educate/home school our children. This isn't a guaranteed right. It is a fragile permission, one that is in jeopardy every time this legislative body meets. And what is more, the options that would be available to us, the home educating community, and everyone else cannot exist without a free market in education or schooling.

The innovation, creativity and quality which people crave in education cannot happen in bureaucracy. These things only happen in a free market. And yet, the innovation and creativity of the free market is not possible as long as forced government schooling captures an 84% national market share (in Montana over 90%). Now, in anyone's book, an 84-90% market share would qualify as a gross monopoly. No monopoly ever has the

incentive to offer good service at a good price. If you are looking for a monopoly guilty of price gouging, don't look at the gas pump, look at the government school system.

To gain some understanding of what we have been missing without educational freedom consider this: How could we imagine all the varieties that exist in free market restaurants if all we had experienced for the past 150 years was an army chow line?

Are there good people in the government school system? Of course there are. But when good people work in a bad system the system always wins.

We did not always have a government school monopoly enforced and protected by the compulsory school attendance law. Before the first compulsory school attendance law was enacted in Massachusetts in the 1850's, America had a remarkably diverse and far more literate population than we have ever had since. Our educational freedom was sacrificed 150 years ago by social engineers on the altar of planned economies.

We need free markets, free minds, free people.

I strongly support the passage of House Bill 404.